

# “What is God Teaching Me?”

Brad Jersak

“God, open my eyes today to your caregiving love.”

## What is God teaching me in this?”

I hear this question frequently, most often through the trials and tragedies of life. When something goes wrong and life grinds our nose in the dust, we might wonder what lesson we’re to learn.

It’s almost as if once you learn the lesson, you can move forward. Honestly, while the question is an expression of genuine humility, I think the question itself smuggles in extra painful assumptions that we would do well to discard. If we think that God imparts wisdom through any circumstance, no problem.

But if we view our painful circumstances and afflictions as a lesson sent by God, then God becomes the first cause of every trial so that when the tragedies start accumulating, it becomes harder and harder to trust that God is Good and that God can be trusted. Then God becomes the cruel headmaster and we’re reduced to the class dunce who either fails to pass the test or become the victim of a bully teacher’s cruel pedagogy. This inevitably leads to distrust and resentment. For these reasons, I recommend moving on to healthier premises and a better question.

Here’s one angle, based on my chapter, “Sh\*t Happens and God Cares” in *A More Christlike God* (CWRpress, 2015).

## LIFE HAPPENS & GOD IS GOOD

Slips happen. Injuries happen. God never causes them. At. All. No need to blame God or blame yourself. Trinitarian Love doesn’t manipulate

human freedom. Our choices open and close doors and God works with that and around that and through that, even when we make bad decisions. As my 12-step sponsor says, “Sometimes the toilet seat is just up. It doesn’t mean anything.”

Assume that. Assume that God is for you, that Christ cares about your life and that the investment he brings to the table is YOU and his great love for you. This care doesn’t include levitating you when you slip ... life doesn’t and can’t work that way. But Trinity’s care DOES include some kind of real caregiving. It must. And that is my hope.

## GOD’S CAREGIVING LOVE



Instead of asking “What are you teaching me?” I pray, “*God, open my eyes to your care for me today. What does your care look like?*” This question seems better to me. Why?

Because it assumes Christ’s care and draws our attention to ways of care that we can participate in willingly. My sense is that the ‘lesson’ question (what is God teaching me?) diverts us from recognizing the ways of God’s care and may even cause us to resist God’s active participation in our lives. Indeed, a good “prayer of examen” (i.e., evening prayer self-examination) might be, “How have I been resisting your care and

how can I receive it?” From there, we may sync up with God’s goodness in our lives. If a lesson is to be learned, that alignment with God’s mercy might just be it. □

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